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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how three experienced teachers responded to beginning readers' errors. Participants were three teachers and their assigned tutees in the summer 1999 course, Interactive Literacy Intervention. Pre- and post-course sessions of the tutee reading to the tutor were videotaped. Transcripts of the sessions were made, and miscues, self-corrections, and teacher corrections were coded and analyzed. Researchers determined whether each teacher had a dominant or preferred feedback style, such as ignoring errors or suggesting a meaning or decoding strategy and whether this varied according to miscue type. In the pre-course sessions, teachers were each found to display a preferred feedback response, and the response style varied little according to type of miscue. In the post-course sessions, each teacher maintained the same feedback preference, but two of the teachers varied their feedback according to whether or not the error changed text meaning. The importance of teacher feedback to children's oral reading and suggestions for modifying the intervention course are discussed. (Author/SM)

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Teacher Response to Beginning Reader Errors:

Three Case Studies

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Abstract

This study investigated how three experienced teachers responded to a beginning reader's errors. Subjects were 3 teachers and their assigned tutees in the Summer 1999, *Interactive Literacy Intervention* course. Pre and post course sessions of the tutee reading to their tutor were video taped. Transcripts of the sessions were made and miscues, self-corrections and teacher corrections coded and analyzed. Determined were whether each teacher had a dominate or preferred feedback style, such as ignoring errors or suggesting a meaning or decoding strategy and whether this varied according to miscue type. In pre-course sessions, the teachers were each found to display a preferred feedback response and that response style varied little according to type of miscue. In the post-course sessions, each teacher maintained the same feedback preference, but two of the teachers now varied their feedback according to whether or not the error changed text meaning. The importance of teacher feedback to children's oral reading and suggestions for modifying the intervention course are discussed.

Teacher Response to Beginning Reader Errors:

Three Case Studies

When beginning readers read, they make mistakes. The teacher listener then does something they think will help the child develop as a reader. In other words, they respond to the error. The way the teacher responds sets up an expectancy message for the child as to how to approach the reading task. The purpose of this project was to investigate experienced teachers' feedback to children's oral reading errors and the possible impact of an intervention course. This is an outgrowth of an original study by the proposer (1996) in which the miscue and feedback classification categories were developed.

Theoretical framework. An error episode is defined as "the sequence of events initiated by an oral reading error..." (Chinn, Waggoner, Anderson, Schommer & Wilkinson, 1993, p.362). This series of events involves first, the reader making an error, second, the reader reacting in some way to his or her own error (including the reader ignoring the error or not being given the chance to react) and third, the teacher listener providing feedback in some way (including choosing to ignore the error). Teachers also provide expectancy messages in other types of short responses and interactions as the child reads. For example the feedback and interactions may focus on word pronunciation (decoding) or on content (meaning).

The conceptual framework and techniques for looking at oral reading performance were first provided by Kenneth and Yetta Goodman and Carolyn Burke (Goodman, 1967; K. Goodman & Burke, 1973; Y. Goodman & Burke, 1972, Stanovich, 1991). Teachers have three basic decisions to make when an oral reading error is made. They must decide whether to give feedback, when to give it, and what type to give (Chinn et al., 1993; Hoffman et al., 1984). Feedback can be classified as terminal, providing the correct word, or sustaining, supplying some

type of aid to help the reader figure out the word. Sustaining feedback has been found by clinical experience (Clay, 1979) to be the type of feedback most likely to help students become better readers.

Method

Three experienced teachers enrolled in Reading 720, *Interactive Literacy Intervention*, for the Summer of 1999 and the children they tutored were involved in the study. Each child was given an appropriate level book to read aloud. The tutor was directed to do whatever they thought best when the child made an oral reading error. Each pair was video taped both before and after the tutor had completed the *Interactive Literacy Intervention* course. The course was a four week summer class that met for four days a week. Transcripts were made of each reading session. Miscues were recorded and classified as to whether or not they changed text meaning. Reader and tutor response was also recorded and classified. The dominant or preferred feedback style for each tutor was identified for each pre and post course reading session.

Results and Conclusions

Tutoring pair #1. In the pre-course reading, before any specific tutoring, Shala made mostly syntactic and nonsense miscues and hesitations. Very few of her miscues kept the story meaning intact. Shala made self-corrections for less than half of her errors and tended to use a decoding strategy when she did attempt a self-correction. Ms. E., her tutor, allowed very few miscues to go with no correction. Her preferred correction pattern was to suggest a decoding strategy to Shala.

In the post-course reading, after four weeks of tutoring, Shala continued to make primarily syntactic and nonsense miscues and hesitations. Again very few miscues kept the story

meaning intact. Shala made few self-corrections and continued to primarily use a decoding strategy in her self-correction attempts. Ms. E. continued to allow few miscues to go uncorrected. Her preferred assistance pattern continued to be suggesting a decoding strategy. In conclusion, there was little or no change in the child's reading behavior and in the teacher's feedback behavior.

Tutoring Pair #2. In the pre-course reading, Odessa made fairly equal numbers of miscues that either retained text meaning or distorted meaning. Odessa self-corrected approximately 14% of her errors using decoding and meaning strategies fairly equally. Ms. C.'s preferred feedback strategy was to ignore the errors and provide no correction. This did not differ for meaning change or no meaning change errors. When she did provide a correction, she preferred to suggest a meaning strategy to Odessa, but did occasionally suggest a decoding strategy or just provide the correct word.

In the post-course reading, Odessa continued to make fairly equal number of miscues that retained text meaning and that distorted meaning. She self-corrected approximately 31% of her errors, primarily using a meaning strategy when it could be determined how she was making the self-correction. Ms. C. continued to prefer to ignore errors. This did differ somewhat. Now she primarily ignored just non-meaning change miscues rather than all errors as she had done before. When she did provide a correction she fairly equally suggested a decoding or a meaning strategy to Odessa. In conclusion, the correction of only meaning-altering errors can be considered a positive change. It could also be considered positive that Odessa increased her self-correcting behavior. This was perhaps due to the tutor's tendency to ignore errors providing Odessa the opportunity to make self-correction attempts.

Tutoring Pair #3. In the pre-course reading, Morgan made mostly syntactic and nonsense miscues and hesitations. Very few of her miscues kept the story meaning intact. Approximately 23% of the time she made self-correction attempts, when it was identifiable always using a decoding strategy. Approximately 40% of the time, Ms. R. let the miscues go uncorrected, whether they changed the story meaning or not. When she did provide a correction she equally suggested a decoding strategy or just provided the word to Morgan. Only 1% of her corrections involved suggesting a meaning strategy for Morgan to try.

In the post-course reading, Morgan made fairly equal numbers of miscues that either retained text meaning or distorted meaning. She made hardly any self-corrections. Ms. R. provided feedback a little over half the time most often suggesting a meaning strategy. She also focused her corrections exclusively on meaning change errors allowing the non-meaning change errors to go uncorrected. In conclusion, it is a positive change that Morgan made more errors that did not change text meaning. Her tutor also focused more on correcting only the meaning altering errors and now quite often suggested a meaning strategy to Megan.

Significance

Since oral reading is extremely common in elementary classrooms, particularly with beginning readers in the lower grades, it is a crucial area of study. Oral reading occurs as part of an instructional interaction between teacher and student (Hoffman & Baker, 1981). Teacher feedback during oral reading informs the learner about the accuracy with which she or he is performing the task and allows either the teacher or the student to engage in corrective activity (Hoffman et al., 1984). Effective feedback can encourage a perception of reading as meaning-making and encourage an independent, rather than a passive learner stance (Purcell-Gates & Dahl,

1991). That teachers exhibit a strong feedback preference that tends to remain consistent over time is an important finding and has implications for the development of pre-service and inservice educational programs and for the modification of instructional activities in the Reading 720 *Interactive Literacy Intervention* course.

A modification to consider is offering the intervention course only in the traditional 14 week term rather than in a condensed summer session. Four weeks may just be too short of a time to expect any significant changes in tutor feedback or in a child's oral reading strategies. This must be balanced, though, with the advantages of meeting daily in the summer versus only once a week during the regular term. Perhaps a more realistic goal for the intervention course, regardless of how offered, would be for the teacher-tutors to just become acutely aware of their preferred feedback pattern and able to monitor their actions as a first small step toward providing more appropriate and beneficial supportive feedback to a child's oral reading.

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